

Once you do, you begin to understand their importance and the need to protect them for the continued health of our oceans.

Boating gives us these cherished opportunities to commune with nature. It should be no surprise that boaters can be impassioned stewards of the environment, teaching future generations of boaters a healthy respect and appreciation for our natural resources.

It is for these and other reasons that I introduced House Resolution 505, recognizing the contributions of the recreational boating community and the boating industry to the continuing prosperity and affluence of the United States. This resolution calls upon President Bush to issue a proclamation to observe National Boating Day with an appropriate time being July 1.

I was happy to have so many of our colleagues from the Boating Caucus join me in supporting this resolution, including the distinguished co-chairs of the caucus, the Honorable GENE TAYLOR from Mississippi and the Honorable CANDICE MILLER from Michigan. I am sure that they can attest that boating is an integral part of our economy and our quality of life not just for those along the coast but for the entire country.

Mr. Speaker, I applaud my colleagues for adopting this resolution today and recognizing the contributions of recreational boating and the boating industry.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Texas (Mr. POE) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Mr. POE addressed the House. His remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

THE PROSECUTION OF FORMER U.S. BORDER PATROL AGENTS

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. JONES) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. JONES of North Carolina. Mr. Speaker, the House Judiciary Committee is scheduled to hold a hearing this week to examine mandatory minimum sentencing laws. Included in this hearing will be the opportunity to examine the issue of mandatory minimum sentencing in the case of U.S. Border Patrol Agents Ramos and Compean.

As the Members of this House well know, in February, 2006, the two agents were convicted in a U.S. District Court in Texas for shooting a Mexican drug smuggler. They were sentenced to 11 and 12 years in prison respectively, and today is the 160th day since the agents entered Federal prison.

The law that the agents were charged with violating, 18 United States Code, section 924(c)(1)(A), carries a mandatory minimum sentence of 10 years. As enacted by Congress, the law requires a

defendant to be indicted and convicted either of "using" or "carrying" a firearm during and in relation to the commission of a crime of violence or "possessing" a firearm in furtherance of a crime of violence.

However, neither Mr. Ramos nor Mr. Compean were ever charged with specific elements of the crime. Instead, the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Western District Court of Texas, Mr. Johnny Sutton, extracted from the U.S. Criminal Code a sentencing factor, "discharging" a firearm, and substituted that sentencing factor for the congressionally defined elements of the offense. Ten years of each of their sentences were based on an indictment and conviction for a Federal crime that does not exist. The law they were charged with violating has never been enacted by the United States Congress but rather was fashioned by the U.S. Attorney's Office.

In this case I can imagine how difficult it would be to obtain an indictment and conviction for "using," "possessing," or "carrying" a firearm when the Border Patrol agents were required to carry firearms as part of their job. That difficulty may well explain why this U.S. Attorney's Office unilaterally changed Congress's definition of a crime to a definition that would be easier for the prosecution to prove.

When this issue was brought to my attention and to the attention of my colleagues VIRGIL GOODE and former Texas State Judge TED POE, we were pleased to join forces with the Gun Owners Foundation, U.S. Border Control, U.S. Border Control Foundation, and the Conservative Legal Defense & Education Fund to file a friend of the court brief in the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fifth Circuit. The brief urges reversal of these unjust convictions and 10-year mandatory minimum sentences by spelling out how charges contained in two counts of the indictment against the agents are fatally defective. I want to thank Chairman JOHN CONYERS for scheduling a hearing on this issue, as well as the Subcommittee on Crime and Terrorism and Homeland Security for its willingness to investigate the injustice committed against these two border agents.

I encourage the chairman and the committee to take a thorough look at the action of the Office of the U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas and his aggressive prosecution of law enforcement officers like Ramos and Compean.

Mr. Speaker, as I close, I want to let the families of Compean and Ramos know that we are not going to forget these two border agents. They are heroes and should never have been sent to prison.

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The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mr. HALL of New York). Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WOOLSEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

(Ms. WOOLSEY addressed the House. Her remarks will appear hereafter in the Extensions of Remarks.)

U.S. TRADE DEFICIT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentlewoman from Ohio (Ms. KAPTUR) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. KAPTUR. Mr. Speaker, the U.S. trade deficit continues its relentless spiral upwards. More red ink. More outsourced jobs. More foreign imports. Nothing seems capable of slowing it down, neither the misguided Bush administration policy of forcing down the value of the dollar on global markets, nor a half-hearted, ineffective and ultimately unsuccessful attempt to increase U.S. exports. America wants results, not rhetoric.

According to recent reports, the current account deficit, which is the broadest measure of the trade deficit, reached \$193 billion just in the first quarter of this year. Every year the red ink gets deeper. This represents 5.7 percent of our gross domestic product. It is a heavy ball and chain on the economic growth in our country, and it is becoming heavier. The trade deficit in goods in the first quarter surpassed \$200 billion, and it dwarfed surpluses in services and income payments.

Although you won't hear it from the economists on the coasts, the gargantuan deficit in goods is a dagger pointed at the heart of the economy in parts of the country such as I represent. We need action in Washington to stop the loss of jobs due to the trade deficit hemorrhage and unfair foreign competition, including the remaining closed markets of the world in first world nations like Japan.

The trade deficit, Mr. Speaker, reveals two fundamental weaknesses in our national economic policy. First is our unforgivable utter dependence on imported petroleum, the primary category of trade deficit. American consumers end up paying twice for the government's failure to declare energy independence, first when they fill up, and second, when their own economy is undermined by the global oil giants working in tandem with the repressive kingdoms of the Middle East and other places.

One would think that our government would have heard the warnings long enough and often enough to take action against our dangerous dependence on foreign oil, and I mean real action, like energy independence within a decade.

The President talked about it in his State of the Union speech, but he has not followed up with action. In fact, in his administration we are importing a billion more barrels of petroleum annually from other countries. So we should not be surprised, maybe, considering the President and Vice President are both oil men at heart.

The other weakness revealed by the current account deficit is our failure to